



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 5, 2013

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**Budget and Finance Committee receives report from  
the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management**

*Status update of FEMA grants allocated to chapters*

**WINDOW ROCK** – On Tuesday, the Budget and Finance Committee received a report from the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management. DEM director Rosalita Whitehair updated the BFC on the status of the Federal Emergency Management Agency grants that were allocated to chapters throughout the Navajo Nation.

BFC vice chair Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin) requested the report to be added to Tuesdays' agenda, due to the urgent nature of the matter.

According to Whitehair, FEMA has allocated funds to chapters that were in need of emergency relief in their areas due to natural disasters that occurred over the last eight to nine years.

"Currently, we are working on the oldest emergency projects first, which date back to 2005," said Whitehair.

When chapters submit emergency declarations, they receive assistance from FEMA in the form of a reimbursement check that covers 75-percent of the project costs. However, the chapters are responsible for a 25-percent match-cost to ensure the project is 100-percent complete, stated Whitehair.

BFC member Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock) expressed concern regarding two deadlines on a memorandum sent to chapters from DEM, dated June 13.

"There are two dates on the memo, which I think might be confusing chapters as to when they need to complete their project," said Delegate Simpson.

Whitehair explained that chapters receive checks up front when they receive FEMA funding. However, they must use the funds for the specific scope of work outlined in their project plan, and the actual physical construction must be completed by Aug. 1, 2013.

"Once the scope of work is completed, our department and chapters must have the reconciliation of financial paperwork completed by Sept. 30, 2013 for FEMA to review," said Whitehair.

“Chapters have asked how these funds are to be used and some are even returning the checks for fear they are spending it in the incorrect manner,” said Delegate Nez regarding reimbursement checks.

In response to the confusion over FEMA policies, Whitehair explained that there are different emergency categories that chapters can refer to in the FEMA public funds policy handbook.

Category A and B, are funds for immediate use in emergencies and may be utilized as the chapter sees fit, said Whitehair. Category C through G, are for permanent projects that are funded when chapters have established a specific scope of work, which they cannot deviate from.

Whitehair added, “FEMA will not grant any more extensions to the deadline, although many requests have already been made.”

At the end of the discussion, Whitehair stressed that if chapters have any questions or need further clarification regarding FEMA grants, they need to contact the DEM office as soon as possible.

“I commend the partnership between DEM and the Office of the Controller for getting checks out to chapters quickly,” said Delegate Nez.

BFC voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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